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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
1 April 1966

ARMY review(s) completed.

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

The seizure of General Chieu, a prominent member of the ruling Directorate, by antigovernment forces in Hue, and the spreading of protest activity to new areas of II Corps and the delta, reflect a worsening of the political situation. Premier Ky now may have to make a decision as to whether to risk the use of strong measures to put down the current agitation or to make further concessions to demands for early civilian rule.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Viet Cong terrorists early today bombed a major billet for US officers in the Cholon district of Saigon, inflicting heavy American casualties (Paras. 1-2). Viet Cong use of 4.2-inch mortars in South Vietnam's III Corps has been confirmed for the first time (Para. 3). Seven US Army battalions now have been committed to Operation LINCOLN--the major American offensive against multiregimental Communist troop concentrations in southern Pleiku and northern Darlac provinces (Para. 4). US 25th Infantry Division forces are continuing Operation CIRCLE PINES in Hau Nghia Province (Para. 5). B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked a suspected PAVN regimental base/storage complex in northernmost Quang Tri Province (Para. 6).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

Directorate Secretary General Chieu was detained by the Hue struggle committee but has been released and returned to Thi's house (Para. 1). Hue was quiet this afternoon although the civil servants strike was in progress (Para. 2). Events in Da Nang and antigovernment activities in other cities of I and II Corps are outlined (Para. 3). Ky's plan to make a show of force is apparently becoming widely known (Para. 4). Communiqué No. 1 issued by the Cao Dai religious sect today appears to support Buddhist demands for civilian rule (Para. 5).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi
propaganda is attempting to fan the flames of the
present political unrest in South Vietnam but has
avoided mention of any role being played by the
NFLSV in the demonstrations (Paras. 1-2).

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The NFLSV
delegate to the Soviet party congress followed the
North Vietnamese lead in stressing the Front's
determination to continue the fight in South Viet-
nam (Para. 5).

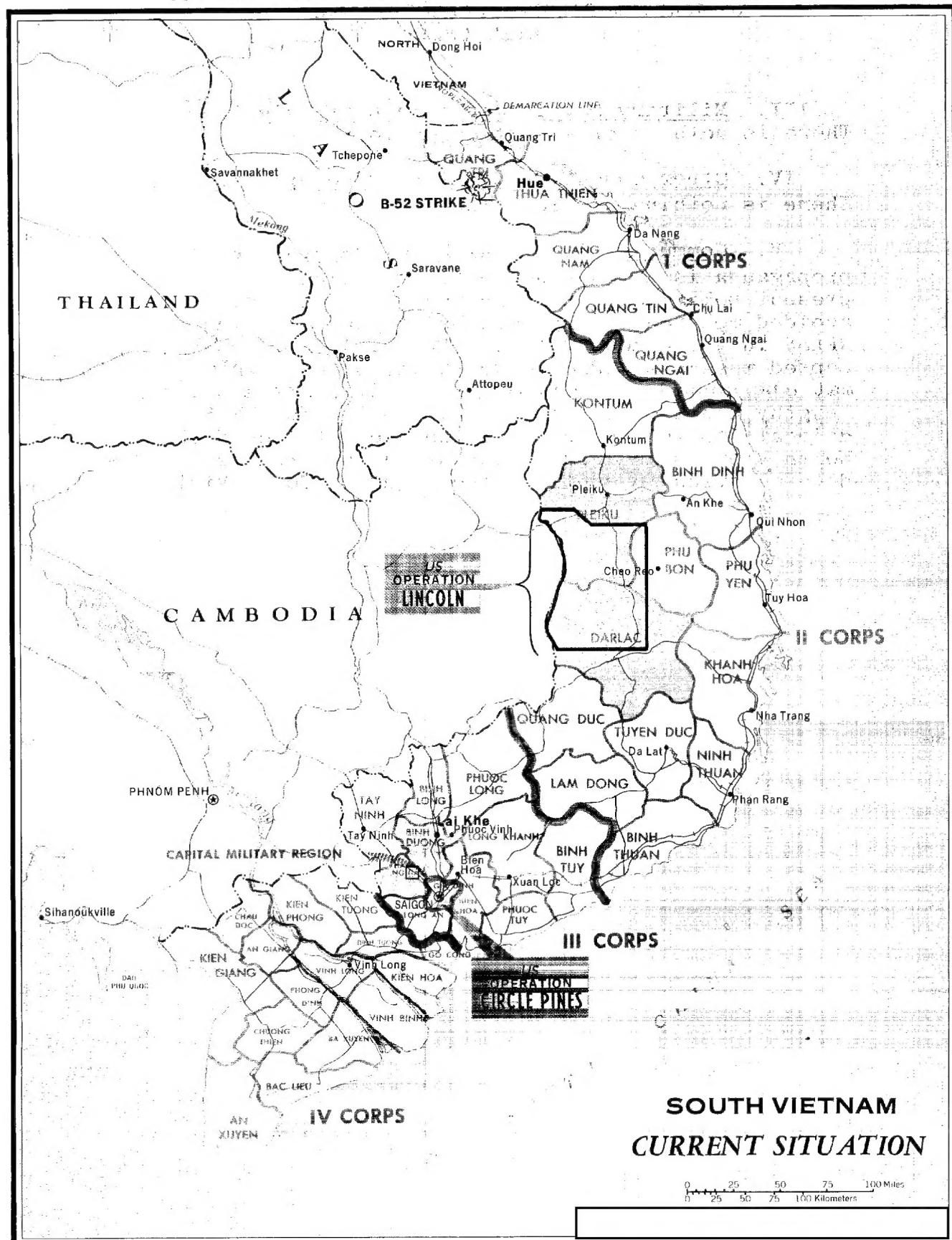
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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Hanoi Radio has broadcast congratulations to the Viet Cong "Liberation Armed Forces" who early today detonated an estimated 200-pound plastic explosive charge in front of the Victoria Hotel, a US bachelor officers' quarters in the Cholon district of Saigon. The terrorist incident resulted in friendly casualties of six killed (3 US military and 3 Vietnamese) and 127 wounded (107 US military, 6 US civilians, 3 Australians, and 11 Vietnamese). The building itself sustained major structural damage, including the complete destruction of the first two floors and heavy damage to the third floor.

2. The saboteurs, following well-established Viet Cong terrorist tactics, used two vehicles in the attack, sending one of them past the billet in a diversionary move to fire on guards and hurl grenades while a second vehicle containing the main charge was maneuvered into position against the building. Late press reports, unconfirmed by MACV, indicate that Vietnamese police have seized two suspects, one of whom has apparently admitted taking part in the attack.

3. The use of 4.2-inch mortars by the Viet Cong in III Corps has been confirmed for the first time. US Army technical intelligence has established that ten rounds were fired against the 3d Brigade/US 1st Infantry Division near its base camp at Lai Khe, in Binh Duong Province, on 28 February. The Viet Cong captured two of these mortars in Quang Ngai Province in October 1964.

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Allied Operations

4. Headquarters, US 1st Air Cavalry Division has assumed operational control of Operation LINCOLN and has committed two additional battalions to the original five-battalion US Army ground sweep against multiregimental Viet Cong/PAVN troop concentrations in southern Pleiku and northern Darlac provinces. No major contact has been reported with Communist units in the sweep area during the past 24 hours. Since its initiation on 24 March, LINCOLN has resulted in known enemy losses of 98 killed (body count), seven captured, and 24 weapons seized, as against US casualties of 32 killed, 45 wounded, and three missing. One hundred and thirty-seven tactical air sorties have been flown in support of the operation thus far.

5. Operation CIRCLE PINES, by three battalions of the US 25th Infantry Division, continues according to plan in Hau Nghia Province. The search-and-destroy ground sweep, currently in its fifth day, has resulted in cumulative Viet Cong losses of 32 killed (body count), an additional 71 estimated killed by air strikes, 16 weapons captured, 21 tons of rice seized, and numerous ammunition caches and tunnel complexes destroyed. US losses currently stand at six killed, 50 wounded, and 10 tanks, eight APCs, and one helicopter damaged.

6. Twelve USAF B-52 Stratofortresses last night attacked a Viet Cong rice storage area approximately 40 miles west of Hue. This area is suspected to contain a PAVN regimental headquarters with its organic battalions and companies. Poststrike ground exploitation of the strike zone was not scheduled.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM:

1. The Hue struggle group continued today to keep tension in I Corps at a dangerous level. A struggle spokesman on Radio Hue called on the transport and cyclodrivers to assemble at the government delegate's house where General Thi, Directorate Secretary General Chieu, and police chief Lieu were staying. As Chieu attempted to leave the house, a crowd estimated at 10,000 peacefully escorted him to the radio station where a spokesman demanded to know what Chieu was plotting against them. Chieu attempted to make a conciliatory speech that did not satisfy the struggle group, which took him to their headquarters. Later, Chieu was apparently released and will reportedly remain at General Thi's home in Hue overnight.

2. By midafternoon, Hue was once again quiet, although a strike of civil servants was reported 100 percent effective and is expected to continue tomorrow.

3. In Da Nang, the "struggle" forces announced that the time limit imposed for a satisfactory settlement of the incident involving US Marines and demonstrators on 30 March has expired. A meeting has been called to plan further action. US installations in the city are alert to possible trouble. Demonstrations also spread to Qui Nhon and Dalat where students unsuccessfully attempted to use the radio station. High schools were reported closed in the cities of Quang Tri, Kontum, and Pleiku.

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4. Premier Ky told the cabinet at a special meeting yesterday that he plans to use paratroopers and marines to control the demonstrators in I Corps.

[redacted] two marine battalions have been brought to Saigon and are preparing to move to Hue. Although the proposed move of troops to I Corps trouble spots is supposed to be closely held, the struggle committee in Hue this morning charged that three marine battalions will be sent there on US aircraft to suppress demonstrators. Ky is reportedly irritated that Thich Thien Minh broke his word and permitted the Buddhist ceremony yesterday in Saigon's central market to take on anti-GVN and anti-American overtones.

5. According to a late press report, the Cao Dai religious sect has charged that the National Leadership Council is "illegal" and demanded that it be dissolved immediately. Following on Catholic expressions of dissatisfaction, the Cao Dai statement suggests a further eroding of government support.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi propaganda is attempting to fan the flames of the present political unrest in South Vietnam. An article in the party daily Nhan Dan broadcast on 1 April claimed that the "political struggle" that has been going on in the cities of northern South Vietnam is the direct result of the deep "contradiction" between "US aggressive activity" and the Vietnamese people's struggle for national salvation. The article praised the "peoples' movement" for attempting to fight against the efforts of "the US aggressor and its lackeys" to smother popular indignation by threats of violence and other retaliatory measures.

2. The article made no mention of any role of the NFLSV in the demonstrations. It did, however, praise the role of the "urban people," claiming that by "close coordination with the entire South Vietnamese people in a common struggle, the urban masses will certainly triumph." By linking the current political activity to the "common struggle"--a euphemism for the activities of the NFLSV--Hanoi is apparently attempting to attach to the Front any success that the present antigovernment activities may achieve.

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[REDACTED] In February, politburo member Le Duc Tho publicly criticized the conduct of North Vietnamese foreign affairs. There has been no hint, thus far, of what steps will be taken to improve the operations of the foreign ministry.

5. Soviet press excerpts from the speech to the party congress by the South Vietnam Liberation Front delegate, Madam Nguyen Thi Binh, indicate that she generally followed the same lines as the earlier presentation by the North Vietnamese representative. Two themes dominated both addresses: Vietnamese Communist determination to continue the war, and their gratitude for Soviet assistance. Madam Binh summed up the Front's adamant stand on the subject of a political settlement of the war by insisting that the US must withdraw from South Vietnam, recognize the Front, and "recognize the fundamental rights of the South Vietnamese people as defined by the Geneva agreements."

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